

MARCH 26, 1999

DOCKETS MANAGEMENT BRANCH (HFA-305)
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
5630 FISHERS LANE, ROOM 1061
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852

MAR 30 P1:51

RE: DOCKET # 98N-1038, "IRRADIATION IN THE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING AND HANDLING OF FOOD"

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The FDA should not eliminate the labeling of food treated with radiation or irradiated. Retention of the current terminology of "treated with irradiation" or "treated by irradiation," and the use of the radura symbol on all irradiated whole foods is essential.

Regarding the issue of labeling, in its initial petition, the FDA concluded that irradiation was a "material fact" about the processing of a food, and thus should remain. Consumer acceptability, storage qualities and nutrients are affected. Some irradiated foods have different texture and spoilage characteristics than untreated foods. Most fruits and vegetables have nutrient losses that are not obvious or expected by the consumer.

In addition, processing by irradiation causes chemical changes that are not evident and are potentially hazardous. Meat may have a higher level of carcinogenic benzene. All irradiated foods contain unique radiolytic products that have never been tested.

Whether or not the FDA has approved irradiation as safe, it remains a new technology with no long-term human feeding studies. Customers certainly have a right to know if this process has been used on their food.

The label, which contains important information regarding the processing of the food, should be on the front of the package printed in such a manner that it is easily read. For displayed whole foods such as produce, a prominent informational display similar to that used for meats. It should contain the term "irradiation" and the radura.

Because of the newness of the technology and the need to assess the public health effects of widespread use of irradiated foods, I believe that the FDA's labeling requirement should not be permitted to expire.

Sincerely,

May d' Marie

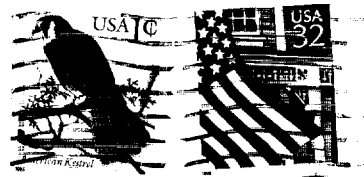
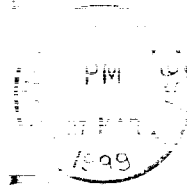
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